thoughts of you consume (deeper than the truth)

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/28119381.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Alana Bloom & Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Hannibal Lecter, Alana Bloom, Will Graham (mentioned), Bedelia du Maurier (mentioned), Chiyoh (Mentioned), Abigail Bloom (mentioned)
Additional Tags:	Pining, Hannibal Lecter Loves Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter Misses Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter Has Feelings, Past Alana Bloom/Hannibal Lecter, Angst, Conversations, Unhealthy Relationships, Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms, AKA framing someone for murder isn't how you cope with a crush Hanni, Post-Episode: s03e07 Digestivo, Pre-Episode: s03e08 The Great Red Dragon, Alana Bloom is So Done, Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, Parallels, Pretentious, Yearning, Alana's Curiosity About Hannigram, Hannibal's Inability to Cope With Emotions, Memory Palace, Childhood Trauma, Everyone Has Issues, The bitching buddies we deserved, they totally give Bedelia & Will a run for their money, Petty Banter, Bitterness, Minor Alana Bloom/Margot Verger, Hannibal Has Regrets, Minor Murder Fantasies, Hannibal totally loved Abigail despite his murder thing okay, She was a daughter to him, and killing her hurt him as much as it hurt Will, he did it to punish Will bc he's still an ass, but he's an ass with feelings
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of unorthodox medicine
Collections:	Hannibal in prison/BSHCI
Stats:	Published: 2020-12-17 Words: 3,500 Chapters: 1/1

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by whentheteacupshatters (RUNNFROMTHEAK)

Summary

"Where did it start?"

Her words are crisp, robbed of the affectionate lilt they'd once held. Red lips release sentiments politely, professionally, an icy veneer of distance they both pretend is more than the falsity it is.

He contemplates, briefly, head tilted with an inherent curiosity in his own answer. He doesn't know himself where this subject pertains. He's never known himself less than in the reflection of Will Graham. It once was exhilarating, but now all he can feel is…the metal sting of Mason's brand, the cold bite of a blade on his wrists, the sting of rain blending with the haze of clouds brimming in his eyes.

"Where did what start, dear Alana?"

***

Alana has questions and Hannibal has answers. If they can drop the mind games, that is.

Notes

This came literally out of nowhere, but I adore it and might make it a series if there's interest! Every sentence in italic is a reference to something or some quote. I might put the reference list in one day, but that day is not today <3

See the end of the work for more notes

Take, oh take those lips away,
That so sweetly were forsworn;
And those eyes, the break of day,
Lights that do mislead the morn:
But my kisses bring again, bring again;
Seals of love, but sealed in vain, sealed in vain

-William Shakespeare, Measure for Measure

"Where did it start?"

Her words are crisp, robbed of the affectionate lilt they'd once held. Red lips release sentiments politely, professionally, an icy veneer of distance they both pretend is more than the falsity it is.

He contemplates, briefly, head tilted with an inherent curiosity in his own answer. He doesn't know himself where this subject pertains. He's *never* known himself less than in the reflection of Will Graham. It once was exhilarating, but now all he can feel is…the metal *sting* of Mason's brand, the cold bite of a blade on his wrists, the sting of rain blending with the haze of clouds brimming in his eyes.

(*but you do, don't you? Pathetic and weak and malleable and* human *in all the ways you've never been. Hopeful and emotive and reckless beyond measures and calculations, almost martyristic in your senseless need to be* seen *and* known *by one who will never appreciate you the way he could. You know, you've never for a second forgotten or missed the creeping tendrils of it, poisonous and lecherous in their stranglehold around your heart. You wish you could pass this off as blindness, but you saw far too much,* sensed *far too much to ever be blind. Not brave, not blind, just disgustingly* human.)

"Where did what start, dear Alana?"

She sighs, a break in steel, and he can see the tired slouch of her shoulders. He wonders, absently, if she and Margot are fighting again. He wonders if Alana's insistence on long hours and careful monitoring is still driving a delightful wedge into the post-him bliss. It is a delicious concept; one he carefully places in a room a few doors down from his kitchen. Something to explore later, in absence of any other form of stimulation.

(*your safe haven more of a capsized refuge in the red sea than a boat along the shoreline, shattered teacups and spilled tea littering the cantankerous waves of crimson retribution. You can't look without seeing* his *eyes, haunted and heavier than the entirety of the sky on your shoulders. You can't breathe without smelling* her *perfume mixed with blood – yours, Jack's, Abigail's, and Will's. You can't listen without hearing his choked,* didn't I? *on an unforgiving*

loop in your horrid eidetic memory. You explore anywhere but that kitchen, yet another home lost to love and weakness.)

"This…*fixation* on Will."

Hannibal's smile is well-practiced, a flash of toxin leaking through the seams of his not-yet repaired skin. The name alone arouses confliction, precarious emotions that rob him of his self-preservation, his distance. A puppeteer hung on his puppet's strings. He wonders, briefly, if this is the promised reckoning from so long ago.

(*You sit in a cell as an appeasement to me. You are alone and friendless, robbed of the life you built just as surely as you robbed me of mine. You wait for me, in the blurred lines of reality where you and I still shift and merge. But I know those rooms now, and I have vacated them. You are alone of your actions, and my will. This is my design.*)

The thoughts hold the fading essence of Will, but Hannibal knows they are his and his alone. Conjoined no more, it would seem.

"Are you familiar with Plato's theory of soulmates?"

Alana knows him well enough to know he seeks no verbal answer, and sips at her wine demurely, inclining her head. The vision of her flickers, carefully coifed hairs released into their familiar soft spirals, lips absent of their sharp red, suits traded for skirts, but this reality of her sticks. His cell fades in and out with his focus, blending and bleeding with his kitchen and Muskrat Farm, and he swirls his own glass of wine appreciatively.

"Zeus created man with four arms, four legs, and two faces. Plato claims he feared his creations as Kronos once had – *as is the Father, so is the Son* – and sought to lessen their threat. By dividing them into two halves, he left his creations hollow and imperfect, endlessly seeking their missing piece through which they could obtain completion and wholeness."

(*you recall reading* Symposio *by the light of your study's fire, riffling through the pages and feeling them resonate for the first time. You recall the well-preserved scent of those ancient pages, transcribed in a more modern Greek, and the way Aristophanes speech fills you with more than a condescending sense of humor.* Love*, you'd once thought,* how trite*. You had thought yourself complete, a butterfly freed from the chrysalis of winter and soups and a litany of other factors that you* became *of, but Will Graham makes you see differently. Will Graham makes you wonder, in more than a philosophical curiosity for the sake of dinner conversation, if there might be another half to you, and if you might want it. But you do, you need it, and you discover it too late to be soft the way you should, too late to repair what you've capriciously broken out of self-preservation and innate sadism and impulsivity you should have rid yourself of in your* il Mostro *days. He whispers words pomegranate sweet in your ear, and you offer him severance with a sharp blade and a murder you never desired, one that* feels *like murder. You regret little, but Abigail stings in a way reminiscent of Mischa; altogether too painful to contemplate in-depth.*)

She cocks her head to the side, curious, and a few stray hairs spill from their place to rest against her expensive silken fabrics.

“I never took you as a student of Plato, nor as someone to put stock in paltry ideals of romance.”

“Oneness is not inherently romantic,” Hannibal counters lightly, “and you’re correct in your assertion regarding Plato. I’ve always found Aristotle’s practicality admirable, and Plato’s insistence of *eudaimonia* rather…simplistic. Distasteful, even.”

“Pursuit of happiness over the pursuit of a greater good. Hedonistic in the fullest sense.”

Hannibal smiles.

“Asceticism is for martyrs and fools. I am neither.”

(*but you are, aren’t you?*)

Alana cocks a brow elegantly. “Aren’t you?” she wonders aloud, sipping delicately without breaking eye-contact. “Here you are, after all. Indulgences are limited here. We don’t serve *meat* the way you do, your wine intake is regulated by me, there are no *affairs*—” that word’s politeness is embittered with resentment, a sweet song of suffering to Hannibal’s ears, “—to engage in. Do you think Will will visit? Return to see you? Is your time here a penance, or an offering?”

(*can it not be both? You wonder. Must it be one? Your time is a penance to Abigail and an offering to Will. A gesture of submission, acceptance, by relinquishing the one thing you had prized above the family you had painstakingly crafted with bonds of blood – your freedom, your pride, your hurt. You give it all to Will because you know now that it means nothing in his absence, it means nothing before his indifference. You can accept hatred, but indifference rankles, it* offends*. You can almost feel the sharp jut of a fishhook stuck in your cheek –* a good fisherman always knows the best bait, *you can imagine Will saying in another life, hands proud and firm on your daughter’s shoulders – or perhaps deeper, because you feel* gutted *by the separation. You would have preferred the intimacy of Will’s hands to this despondency.*)

Hannibal feels a flash of resentment, dark and coiled and twisted, but stifles it with remembrance of the opera – opulence, grandeur, perfectly pitched melodies harmonious and beautifully full. He sifts through his last visitation in Florence sedately – *La Traviata,* specifically the wondrous composition that is *Sempre Libera* – staring into Alana’s eyes and refusing to show any indication that her blow had landed.

“I think,” Hannibal says coolly, “that our Will’s actions and desires will continue to remain at odds until necessity indicates they might become one.”

“You presume he wants to see you?” Alana’s voice holds a note of amusement he finds quite offensive. Rude, almost. Not quite the offense that requires a retaliation but nearing the line.

“You presume he doesn’t?”

At that, she looks away. Over his shoulder to the shelves full of books, and the pinned drawings of Florence’s beautiful streets. He allows himself one drawing of Will a week,

destroying the previous iteration, and tossing it into his fireplace with a vicious sort of indulgence. This week Will's face is marked by shadows and indecision. Ripe, fresh pomegranate juice reddens his pouted lips, left hand clasping the fruit to his mouth as an offering and a prayer. He's dressed in a shortened *chiton* with laurel leaves crowned in a tangled head of chocolate curls, feet left bare of the typical sandals, and free to feel the pictured flowers against his skin. Will's hand is stretched to the sky, face mournful, and his legs are rooted in darkness, wrapped so tightly in it his flesh can't be extracted neatly (if at all). An apt sentiment. Half in darkness, half in light. Unable to commit entirely to either.

Hannibal's beautiful *Proserpina*. His Persephone.

(*but he's not* yours*, is he? He played you for a fool, an instrument of pithy notes attuned entirely to his desires, his designs. You are utterly his, and he isn't the slightest bit yours.* Conjoined*, he'd said, mere moments before attempting to cut you once again from him. Smiling at your impending end or separation – whichever he could attain – rather than at the temporary balm of unity, a comfort only you had felt.*)

Alana examines the picture for a moment with a frown.

"I thought I knew Will. I am capable of admitting he's concealed to me, to some extent. I never fully knew him, and I don't think you did either."

"Hard to know the shape of one who has no real shape," Hannibal offers. "Will does not know himself. He is still clay while we've hardened into marble. Where he can restructure himself to any form he so desires, we must chip away at ourselves to become something new. It is part of what makes him so unpredictable, and what kept his deception from me."

"You broke him," she says after a pause, head tilted curiously.

(*you broke him like one of your teacups, attempting to craft him from gold as Lady Murasaki had once taught you and utterly failing. Too much gold, too little integrity from the original shape. You took and took and took until he had nothing left,* no one *left, and so his reckoning was an utter return of it. His own teacup to take and shatter, one already veined thick with golden repairs and all the beauty of rot and ruin. You are chipped now, chipped and cracked, and even that gold can't hold you together, and you don't bother to fix yourself. There is no point, not in separation. Aristophanes said all humans spend their lives searching for their other half, and you've found yours and lost him. Nothing to keep him, is there? You offered everything you had, and here is what it amounts to – indifference. Disorder. Will Graham after you,* separate *from you. You broke him with hope for a rebirth, and he broke you with hope for a funeral.*)

"It would seem that sentiment is mutual."

Alana sips at her wine to conceal a snort.

"*This* is you broken? Trapped because your own pathologies require a connection only imprisonment allows for?"

"*Stone walls do not a prison make, Nor iron bars a cage*," Hannibal intones patiently. "That is what love is for, my dear."

"You think you're in love with Will?"

His eyes flash, a warning she'll heed if she has the sense left to see it.

"Murder and madness do not equate to the absence of rationality, or emotional ties to those around us. Betrayal and forgiveness are a kind of love, are they not?"

(*your issue has never been feeling. You feel at the same capacity as any other, letting every emotion resonate through you with the high notes of opera and the wonder in artistry of all forms. What separates you from most is your capacity for compartmentalization, your cruelty and anger that aren't halted by typical barriers of love or familial relations or loyalty. You reward cruelty with cruelty, betrayal with betrayal. You might regret the actions of the past, but you have always delighted in the moment, in your pain and the pain of others. Even Will…you'd thought of how still he'd been beneath the saw, felt the stillness of his heart like it was your own as he understood and resigned himself to it. He'd understood…he'd* known *you like before. You will always regret letting yourself fall that far into your own bitterness, into Bedelia's casual words twisting the knot in your chest this way and that, but you will always see the beauty in it too, the satisfaction of heartbreak and suffering. You delight in all of it. He tolerates. It would have never worked, but still, you sit here and hope*.)

She sits back in her chair, a flush of warmth striking in her cheeks. Again, Hannibal revisits the thought he'd had upon first seeing her: her corpse would look lovely in a field of roses, blooming beneath the midnight sky; a fitting end for a fitting name. He thinks his design would be a more sedate one, beautiful in delicacy rather than cruelty.

Hannibal wonders, despite his best efforts, if Will would also find it suitable, if looking would be easier were the death to be more than cruelty as unwitting forfeiture. He thinks of it as another tally against Will, another infection Hannibal is incapable of rooting out. Even his favorite avocation is stained by Will's indecision, his *indifference*.

"*For where God built a church, there the Devil would also build a chapel,*" she retorts after a beat, a contemplative gleam in her eyes. The same look she'd once bestowed upon *poor Will Graham*, so downtrodden and beaten by his *disorder*. It's a colder curiosity fitting her now, cutting like a scalpel in a way that makes Hannibal distinctly proud.

"Worship leaves one weary, and prayers gone unanswered are the greatest test of faith."

"What will make yours break?"

(*you wonder that yourself.*)

Hannibal sips at the wine again, tastes the fruit on his tongue like blood, and wishes, perhaps childishly, that it would stain his mouth if for no more reason than a break in the monotonous *white* of his cell. So clinical, so sterile. He understands it, of course, but the interior design leaves much to be desired.

“Defenestration suits you, dear Alana,” he says as calmly as one might discuss the weather. “In the words of Thomas Henry Huxley, I shall not say I believe that for which I have no grounds for professing to believe.”

Her eyes blaze with anger, fingers white around the arm of her chair and the stem of her wine glass.

“Did you believe he was yours,” Alana starts, lips set in a grimace as she leans forward, “when he impregnated Margot Verger? When he set Mason after you? When he aligned with Jack Crawford instead of you until the reveal of Abigail? When he tried to kill you himself, in Italy?”

Hannibal has no words, and she knows it, delights in it, continuing with all the truths Hannibal has no desire to hear.

“That’s the *real* reason you removed Abigail from the board, isn’t it? You’re in love with Will and so *desperate* for him to return that affection for more than a surrogate daughter you share that you ruined it all yourself. You orchestrated every step of his hatred to earn his love, broke him down to try and make him in your image. You played *God* and fell like the Devil from Will’s affections.”

“*For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.* Is that the parallel you were hoping to draw, Dr. Bloom?”

She smirks, a snake of his own making, and he tastes the fruits of his labor apple-sweet on his tongue.

“He found a way to hurt you.”

(*you can’t look at her, can’t look at the picture you want to burn in the fireplace, or the stains he’s left tracked through every room in your mind he'd ever invaded, permeated. You want to kill, want to remove this pain the way you know best, make it a sight others might behold instead of carrying it solemnly as a torch. You tire of this, tire of it all, and it only aches more when you recall the brightness in Will’s eyes prior to your machinations, prior to your self-preservation and absurdity blinding you to the truth of you.*)

There is nowhere safe from Will, he’s scattered endlessly in the fabric of Hannibal's eternity, weaved in bits of before and bits after. Alana knows this, sees Hannibal’s pain like a dagger embedded in his chest, and twists the blade the way she’s learned because of him. Sweet as soured apples, warm as a winter breeze. Hannibal thinks of the way her lips would look painted in her own blood instead of lipstick and tries to summon his usual veneer of perfect calmness. He delegates emotions to their respective places, categorizes sensations and aches by their links, and burns it all beneath an ocean of winter white snow – the same snow from which he became, and the same snow from which Mischa did not.

"*And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed…*" (and are we not made in his image? *You'd asked Will so long ago*) "*…for God made man in his own image.*"

Hannibal takes a steadying breath, sipping the last drops of wine from his glass and standing, hands clasped behind his back.

"Thank you, as always, for the delightful wine and conversation, Alana. We must do this again sometime."

Her eyes are searching as they rake over him, brows furrowed. He's retreating, and Alana recognizes the value in accepting that. She's always been smart about when to push certain things and when to relinquish control.

"Perhaps," she offers, words a more neutral tone than when she'd first arrived. "I am your psychiatrist now, after all."

"Are you my psychiatrist or are we simply having conversations?"

Her lips pull into a half-smile, as though she knows the memory as he does.

"Yes."

She leaves without another word, and Hannibal allows the snow to lull him to numbness, wine like ashes on his taste buds for all the bitterness fighting its way through the cold.

(You don't want me to have anything in my life that isn't you, *Will had once accused you. It is only now that your life is absent of all else, mind a blank canvas for all its ability to know itself outside of his art upon it, that you concede him that point. You don't want him to have anything in his life that isn't you, and as your perfect opposite, he doesn't want to have anything in his life that* is *you.*)

Hannibal stares up at the ceiling, eyes closed, feeling the phantom flakes cool his cheeks and mind, tangled in his lashes, and pictures starlight through the blizzard. Constellations Will might be examining too, threaded between the planets like the designs of a grand God.

(Didn't I? *he'd asked you, but neither of you needs to answer. He didn't. He'd lured you in with the comforts of a lighthouse, of safety and security, and once you were close enough, he shut that light off and left you to crash amongst the rocks and water.* Didn't I? *he'd choked out, an afterthought you resent. He's changed you, changed you as much as you've changed him. More than you care to admit.* Didn't I? *you should kill him, but even as you stare at his shaking hand, even as he accepts your embrace, you know you won't.*)

He thinks of Shakespeare, in that moment of snowfall and stars, blindingly white:

"*And those eyes, the break of day, Lights that do mislead the morn*."

End Notes

if you like this fic and want to support me + my writing feel free to check out my tumblr <3

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